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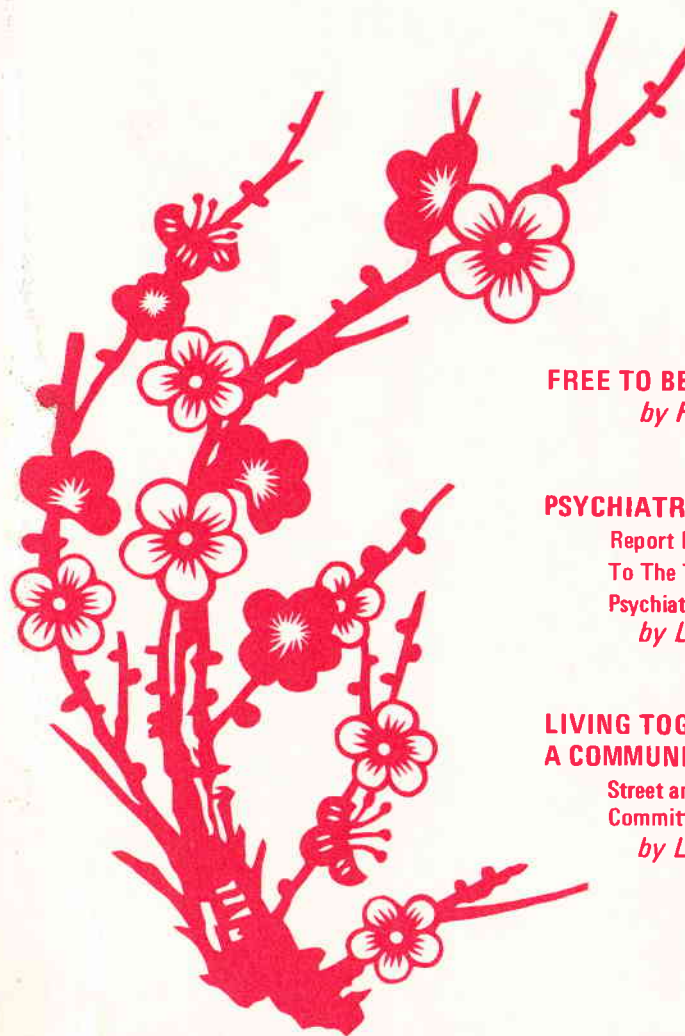
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THE NEW HUMAN BEING
IN THE
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC
OF CHINA



FREE TO BE HUMAN
by Felix Greene

PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT
Report From A Visit
To The Tientsin
Psychiatric Hospital
by Leigh Kagan

LIVING TOGETHER IN
A COMMUNITY
Street and Neighborhood
Committees
by Lucille Stewart Poo

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THE NEW HUMAN BEING IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

FAR EAST REPORTER INTRODUCTION

This issue of Far East Reporter presents three essays on China which serve to answer recurring questions audiences ask those who speak on China.

The essay by Felix Greene, "FREE TO BE HUMAN" is a most provocative and needed presentation. Much of the writing and speaking on China has rightly stressed the truly impressive accomplishments but has largely "missed the essence" of their greatest achievement: the emergence of a freer human being. The contrast between the competition in serving the people, typical among the Chinese, and the egotistic, antagonistic competitiveness of the bourgeois-oriented person, the contrast between the sense of belonging and sharing so widespread in China, and the frustrations and indifference to others' welfare so common in bourgeois society, the contrast between the sense of security in China and the prevailing fear on streets and in homes in the United States - these contrasts are indications of a fundamental achievement of the Peoples's Republic of China.

"But the Chinese have no personal freedom" is a response met by almost every one who speaks on China. Mr Greene gives an answer that forces every enquirer to compare what kind of freedom one has under our bourgeois system with the kind of freedom the Chinese people enjoy under their socialist system.

Another question often met is "What about mental health in China? - what kind of treatment do they have?" Leigh Kagan, from her experience as a nurse's aid in a mental hospital in the United States, writes

about her observations in "THE TIENTSIN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL". Also, in this field of mental health treatment, there is a sense of belonging and cooperation (between patient and staff, between patient and society) and an atmosphere free of fear - elements that characterize the "essence" of the new - the socialist - society now emerging in China.

"Actually, how do Chinese individuals function, politically and in their community activities? isn't it all dictated and controlled from the top?" This is another question often met from audiences.

Lucille Stewart Poo, an American, long-time resident in China and wife of a Chinese bank official, writes - from first-hand and extended observation - of "STREET AND NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEES IN CHINA". She gives details about the ways local residents control vital aspects of their living, about the cooperativeness and feeling of unity of the people and the lack of fear; no fear of old age, no fear of unemployment, no fear about housing, about health, no fear over public sanitation, no fear of bureaucrats! The quality of neighborhood life is "warm, lively, human"!

Felix Greene's article is based on a talk given in London on October 1st 1972 and appeared in the December 1972 issue of CHINA NOW published by the Society For Anglo-Chinese Understanding at 24 Warren Street London W1P 5DG Subscription 2nd class air mail \$6.50 Unsealed surface mail \$4.00

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April 1973

FREE TO BE HUMAN

by: Felix Greene

I am going to talk quite personally and informally about some of the ideas that have been going through my mind, particularly since my last visit to China, where I spent five months earlier this year.

I do not intend to give you a list of China's achievements, although the achievements are very great, because they must be fairly well-known to the audience. Even if they are not, that's not really what I want to talk about.

I have come to think that knowing a great deal about China, accumulating many facts about China, has very little meaning in itself unless we can in some way relate it to ourselves, to our own society, and to ourselves as individuals. I know many people who have a tremendous knowledge about China, who read everything they can about that country, and have been there, but have nonetheless missed the essence. There has been a gap between what they see, the facts that they accumulate, and their own consciousness.

What has been going on in China has been an encouragement to everybody throughout the world who has been aware of it. What they are doing there, I think, constitutes a milestone in the history of human development.

But we can't just leave it at that. Speaking personally, what China has done and is doing - especially since the Cultural Revolution - has acted like a powerful searchlight illuminating our own society, the relationships that we take for granted here, and, again speaking personally, my own behaviour and my own consciousness, and my own relationship to other people.

Now the pointlessness of merely accumulating facts about China was brought home to me a few days ago when I listened to a talk by a very eminent American China-expert who had just returned from five months there and who has considerable influence in his own country. He has a vast mental file-index of information about China which he has to some extent brought up to date during his recent visit. But after listening to him I felt he might just as well not have been there at all. He went with a number of preconceptions and looking through his own particular colored glasses, saw only what those glasses would permit him to see. He said he was sad (and this was merely an example of his thinking) that the Chinese would not enjoy all the technical achievements of the West. He saw a coming crisis in China between the inevitable demand for more consumer goods and the inability of the Chinese technology to provide them. And he went on to say that modern technology equally requires an elite.

It seems to me that he had missed the real point of what the Chinese people are trying to do today, which is to use technical achievements for the service of the people and not allow them to control the society. They believe that the quality of relationship between people is more important than the accumulation of possessions, and that people can possess technical skills without it resulting in their becoming an elite.

The American professor is a fine gentleman in himself - I do not want to denigrate him as a human being. I am merely using him to show that the accumulation of factual information on China does not necessarily help one to penetrate into the reality of what they are attempting to do. But it illustrates, at least to me, something even more important - and that is the depth of the conditioning process to which we are all being subjected in a capitalist world.

This last visit to China made me more aware than I have ever been of the complexity, the subtlety, the total persuasive influence, that bourgeois capitalist ideology exerts upon us from the moment we are born.

This ideology influences every aspect of our lives. It certainly influences our educational system and our moral values, our relationships with each other, our fears, our aspirations, our ambitions. The very structure of our thinking is influenced by the prevailing ideology of our society, starting while we are so young that the cement has not set, so to speak.

It is extremely difficult for us to overcome our conditioning and its pervasion of our whole existence - or even to be aware that we have been conditioned; one need only look at the kind of 'cultural' stuff that is dished out to us, the West End theatre (most of it), the cinema, the BBC, the entertainment - you know, the whole range of it, to realize how very carefully and deliberately it supports the status-quo.

I am thinking also of the various mythologies that have influenced us - the religious mythology, the mythology of royalty which is so deeply rooted in our tribal subconsciousness, and another mythology that one might call the 'democracy' mythology. Those who support the status-quo have succeeded in putting it across to us that by putting a mark on a voting paper every four years for Mr Tweedledum or Mr Tweedledee we are 'democratic'. But democracy, to my way of thinking, has much more to do with the way we feel and act towards each other than with the mere machinery of voting. We concentrate on the formal aspects of the democratic processes which I believe to be the least essential element that is required of a society to make it truly democratic.

A democracy means that there exists between individuals a thousand invisible threads, threads of trust, and of mutual respect and liking - everything that makes us feel at one with each other, and not on guard with each other, creating an atmosphere that does not call for us to be tough or competitive. And I have come to think that democracy and competitiveness are self-contradictory - that as competitiveness comes

in, the sense of democracy goes out. We need only to look at the society that has developed capitalist competitiveness to its ultimate extreme, the United States, to see to what degree of sadness and isolation, human deprivation and violence it drives people. There is no society that has developed the forms of democracy to a higher degree, and yet the living spirit of democracy there has died. So unrelated and fearful are people of each other that few and fewer these days ever dare walk in the streets of the cities alone at night.

China has moved in an entirely different direction. There's no place in China, in any city, where one would feel the slightest anxiety walking alone any time of the day or night, - stranger, foreigner, - it doesn't matter. You feel in China the extraordinary inter-relatedness of people, so that in one sense no one is a stranger to anybody else.

Our educational system of course does its best to buttress these deeply set prejudices and conditioning in ourselves. For some, education establishes a built-in sense of prerogatives and superiority. I don't blame the kids who come down from Eton or Harrow or the other public schools for feeling themselves members of an elite. They are not to blame; it's the structure of society as a whole. Thus for a few, education provides the climate in which they come to feel they are something special, and removed from the common run of mankind. Our educational system also establishes in other people - indeed in the vast majority - a deep feeling of inferiority, educational inferiority. And for all, the privileged and the unprivileged, it creates a belief that this society with these divisions is in accordance with some natural law and therefore cannot be changed, or even radically modified.

If indeed the working people of the country wanted to change things, the power lies in their hands. But they have been conditioned to have a kind of pseudo-respect for the supposedly educated, so they too have been inhibited from action.

All this (as of course it was intended to) has

given rise to our deep-seated Western scepticism. our inability to believe that we could take hold of our society and transform it.

It is no wonder then that Mao Tse-tung emphasized right from the start the importance of the class struggle. We mustn't forget that China had all these conditioning factors in her society, and in some ways they were practiced there to an even greater extent than in our Western societies. China had her elites -- the educated, the rich, the landlords, the big industrialists. She too had her intellectuals with their profound conviction of their social superiority. The Chinese were guilty of a chauvinism that led them to believe that China was the repository of all that was finest and best in human culture and that all others were lesser breeds.

Thus the Chinese revolutionary leaders had all this to contend with, the same problems that are confronting and confusing us, the same deep-seated scepticism, the same doubt that fundamental change is possible. Power, as with us, was in the hands of a few; the Chinese educational system was designed to provide an intellectual elite. No wonder, that from the first, Mao Tse-tung said, "Understand class struggle". And this is, to me at least, the very heart, the root, the very essence of what China stands for and what China tells me. I don't mean the class struggle only in its formal Marxist sense, though that of course is included; and especially I don't mean it in the very flabby use we make of the word 'class' when we are referring to social divisions in our bourgeois society: the 'upper middle class', the 'lower middle class' and so on. But I'm thinking especially of the struggle within ourselves as individuals. I think that our effort must begin with the realization that we are class-conditioned creatures. We are judging society here and everywhere through our particular kind of coloured spectacles and we had better begin to come to terms with that in ourselves - and for those of us with bourgeois upbringing that's no easy job either.

The Chinese found it no easy job either. It not

only took the original revolution, but it took a second revolution, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, really to awaken people in China to the extent they were still carrying within them the legacy of division, classes, elitism, and that the overcoming of this was just as important a part of the revolutionary transformation as the initial struggle to gain state control.

The lesson I have come back with from China is really a very profound one, and I cannot do it justice because I am not a very learned person. It is the conviction that not only must the structure of society be changed so that control is in the hands of the working class but that such change will be dissipated, and eventually subverted, unless there is a change within human beings too.

The professor whom I mentioned earlier, raised another question which I think we need to touch upon here. He said that he had not found in China that respect for individuality and the development of the human personality on which we in the West place so high a value; in other words, he felt there is in China a lack of individual freedom. This deserves to be mentioned briefly because it is indeed one of the big stumbling blocks for anyone who talks about China to groups in the West.

I have come to believe that our ideas about the nurturing of individuality and our concepts of freedom are also class-conditioned ideas. They also are a part of what has been built into us by the prevailing social system. Our present ideas of 'freedom' of course derive largely from the 19th century idea of bourgeois freedom, capitalist freedom, freedom for the emerging industrial owners from any social control. In essence this freedom could be expressed as 'Me first', 'Everyone for himself', 'Grab what you can', and if everybody acted thus, society (so the theory went) would somehow be benefitted. That was the basic philosophy of the new 19th century capitalism.

We have since given up that rather crude definit-

ion of capitalist ideology, but we are still basically operating within the 'Me first', capitalist jungle. Individualism within a competitive capitalist society is necessary for survival. To get on I must push. I must develop myself. I must make more money, and out of this has grown the idea of the sacredness of 'me', 'my' individuality, and 'my' creativity, and so on.

It is a very difficult concept for us to feel and think our way through to, but the question I am beginning to ask myself is: is this development of 'my' individuality, on which we place so high a score, is this the only possible kind of freedom? Or, indeed is it really freedom at all?

The Chinese are showing us that this concept of individuality which has been developed in the West under capitalism, is really not freedom but another kind of imprisonment. It is the imprisonment of 'me' within myself. It is this enclosure of me with all my personal strivings, ambitions, fears, defensiveness, which divides me from other people. It is this 'me-ness' which is the prison, and in the very depths of our consciousness we know this. And how we hate it all! The perpetual struggle to compete, to be cleverer than other people, to get a better education than other people, to have a better job - the constant striving of me against others to get ahead, or to give my ego a boost, knowing that any advance up the ladder of success has almost always to be at the expense of someone else. And we call this freedom!

A cooperative society develops an entirely different kind of ethic, a wholly different concept of freedom - and this is what I learned in China. What we all long for, surely, is to be a part of a society that doesn't divide us from one another, which releases us from the prison, the small, boring world of me: which allows us to be members of a community in which we do not have to push ourselves.

I have seen how the skills and initiative of the Chinese people have been enormously enhanced by the fact that they don't have to compete, or worry about finance

or what's going to happen to them when they get old. They are free of the myriad anxieties that burden us who live in a supposedly free world and thus they are free to relate to each other as human beings -- without fear and without defensiveness: all involved in something bigger than themselves.

Many of you have not been in China, and may feel rather out of it because of that. But you should not think that you cannot understand what they are doing in China or be disheartened if you cannot go there. For the Chinese message is universal: it is not just for China. It is in the very air around us if we listen to it; for it is expressing what we all have in our hearts: the need for a world in which we can be really human.



PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT

REPORT FROM A VISIT TO THE
TIENTSIN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

LEIGH KAGAN

In discussing our visit to the Tientsin Psychiatric Hospital, my intention is less to make generalizations on the field of mental health in China, and more to share some of my observations and insights into the conceptualization and treatment of mental illness in China. In considering the applicability of this discussion to the practice of mental health in China, it may be helpful to know that the record of this visit has been shared with people knowledgeable about mental health care in the People's Republic. They find that it confirms other reports from other recent visits to mental hospitals in different places in China.

The Tientsin Psychiatric Hospital is situated in a neighborhood of small houses and factories. Set up in 1950, its construction and layout are not markedly different from many other institutions that we visited—especially urban hospitals and schools, and even housing developments. Inside the gate, the several-storied wards with a capacity of 500 beds rise around lower, smaller buildings housing offices, set in stretches of yard nurturing young trees. The bars on the windows are not unique, for bars lattice the windows of some of the apartments at a housing development we visited in Canton. Solid, unadorned concrete structures are not intended to isolate the patients and staff from the neighborhood.

At the time of our visit 447 patients were in the hospital, unevenly divided between men—the larger half, and women. They are treated by a medical staff of 47 doctors and 249 nurses, as well as 104 hospital workers. The major part of training for the staff goes on at the hospital itself. Junior and middle grade staff are promoted on the basis of their work on the wards.

The patients whom we saw on the wards were unmistakably ill. Gawking at us with vacant stares, playing table tennis in uncoordinated style, operating at a distinctly slow pace, all whom we saw had about them a dimension of remoteness. Three grades of illness segregate the patients. Severe cases, usually coinciding with recent admission, are given intensive care, and are never unattended; milder cases; and those with slight illness, who are allowed to go out on the hospital grounds. We saw patients of all three grades, but were unable to detect distinctions between them.

We felt no twinges of apprehension or of being on guard as we moved through the wards. Contrary to my own experience as a nurse's aid in a mental hospital in the United States, we felt in the halls no climate of fear of outbursts or rages, either weird or violent. The open, unembarrassed attitude toward the patients might be conveyed in two incidents. The first was the abrupt approach of a young boy who made me his face-to-face audience for his repeated singing of the opening lines of "I Love Peking's T'ien-an Men." No one interceded to interrupt his song. No one commented apologetically or in any way about his performance. He was not scorned. The second was our coming upon a study session (see below) in which the patient was recounting a jumbled set of delusions in which he pictured himself in a spaceship travelling at nearly the speed of light and regaining his youth, while his son, who had a computer for a brain, tracked his father's whereabouts at all times. No lowered voices or pause in the telling greeted our arrival, no explanation of this isolated peek into the patient's world.

Patients come to the hospital by family or co-workers' referral, either by reporting to the hospital or requesting that the hospital come to get the patient. Labor protection insurance covers the patient's hospitalization expenses of 50 yuan (US\$22.50) a month for bed, food and medicine. It pays in full for workers and one-half for family dependents. This is standard coverage for medical expenses. Upon admission, the patient is examined primarily by talking about his/her class background, occupation, and personal history. Hospital medical staff carry on additional investigation by speaking with the family and others outside the hospital who are related to the patient. These inquiries constitute social investigation upon which education is based.

EDUCATION, COMBINED WITH MEDICATION, EXERCISE, WORK

Education in combination with medication is the main method of treating mental illnesses. Medication itself combines herbal medicines, acupuncture, and Western medicines. One form of acupuncture transmits through needles an electrical current whose strength is regulated according to the patient's response, up to a maximum amperage. We did not establish how much reliance is put on drugs, how the administration of drugs is related to education, nor whether dosages are modified with more weight on education.

Physical exercise and work are the two other types of treatment, together occupying three hours in the daily schedule. Work itself fills one hour a day. We saw men patients separating cloth from rubber waste material on the ward, and women making padded cotton quilts from old cotton-padding on the auditorium floor, activity that seemed to have a certain make-

work quality to it. The type of work being done might indicate either that this is all that the patients are capable of, or that work therapy is subsidiary to and less rigorous than education and medication. Also, the make-work impression derived as much from the way in which the work was done—with lassitude, as from the tasks themselves. In either case, the work is still genuinely productive, the product will go into use, and is comparable in quality to work done by people in China who are not in mental hospitals.

The use of education together with medication in the treatment of mental illness is a result of the Cultural Revolution. Previously, we were told, medicines and especially Western medicines were relied on. The new method is premised on certain assumptions about the relationship between social systems and mental illness which are fundamental to conceptualization and treatment, and to diagnosis and prognosis. Freudian psychology as well as bio-chemical theories of mental illness are opposed and rejected because they hold that the cause of mental illness is within the sick person. Stressing only internal causes and neglecting external causes of mental illness overlooks the fact that there are very real social causes for mental illness—especially among exploited classes.

According to the Chinese analysis, mental illness must be understood as having two interrelated causes. Internal causes lie in physical changes in the body which precipitate or otherwise affect misperceptions of reality. External causes differ according to social systems. In a capitalist society unemployment, alcoholism and drug addiction are certain external causes of mental illness. Since only a change of society can eliminate these causes, the mental illness, particularly of workers in a capitalist society, cannot be cured unless the society itself is changed.

In a socialist society the persistence of class struggle and of old bourgeois ideas are the external causes of mental illness, they believe. Since the social system itself does not generate mental illness, conflicts between the mental health and the social environment of people—the mental disturbances caused by disrupted family and other relationships, are a result of the lingering influences of bourgeois values in the individuals affected. Since mental illness in China arises from problems not present on a society-wide scale, but from individual problems amenable to solution, the social system facilitates its cure. The core treatment is re-education, to persuade the individual to correct him/herself.

SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND SOCIETY

The supportive relationship between medical staff, patients and the social system was illustrated by a woman patient with a scar on her forehead which she thought had been concealed by her hair at the time of her marriage. When her husband became very busy after marriage, she suspected him of rejecting her because he had discovered the scar. To treat her, the hospital staff investigated her account of her husband's behavior. She had told the hospital that her husband often returned home very late. The hospital staff found that her husband was not returning home as late as she thought, and moreover, that he still loved her. He and the neighbors were invited to come to the hospital to discuss this with the woman. Specifically, the husband was asked if he knew about the scar. Of course he knew, he said. How could a few strands of hair cover over a scar that he had seen even before they were married? At the urging of the hospital staff, the husband expressed his love to his wife. They assured the woman that in a socialist society, where the social system limits one husband to one wife, she was protected by the society itself from her husband's rejection for a second wife. In other words, both the laws and the morality of the society—in which husband and wife relate to each other as comrades, militate against either his wanting or being able to object to a wife on the superficial grounds of a facial scar.

EDUCATION FOR SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Education is conducted in study sessions which are held daily for an hour on the ward. Their results are written down together by the participating doctors and patients. They are posted on the corridor walls of the wards by a patient in charge of this activity. Each patient studies a particular essay by Mao Tse-tung designed to deal with his/her central problem as diagnosed. The following case serves as an example.

A male teacher became on good terms with a female colleague in the course of his work. But she was not interested in him, for she acquired another boyfriend. The first man became ill over this. He thought that everyone had designs on him. For treatment, he was given acupuncture and Chinese traditional herbal medicine. As a result of this, he recovered somewhat, realizing at times that his view of others' actions toward him was unbalanced. But other times not. He began to study Mao's essay, "Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?" Through repeated study and discussion he was helped to realize that his illness arose because his ideas came not from reality but from his own head. People from his school came to participate in these discussions, and to tell him that they had no plots against

him. In these ways, he came to realize that his ideas were metaphysical and not materialistic, that he had a mistaken world view. Later he wrote down his new understanding, and established his own grasp of dialectical materialism. At the request of the doctors, he presented his experience to other patients.

A further example of education in the treatment of a particular illness is found in the case of a worker who was assigned to make technical innovations on a machine. He determined to do a good job, and sometimes worked very late. When a setback occurred in the improvement of the machine, he felt that he had failed to accomplish the task entrusted to him, that he was not worthy of the hope placed in him by the Party and the revolution, and that his comrades would laugh at him. He continued to work hard at the job during the day, but at night suffered from insomnia. He became ill, suspecting the leaders and his comrades of not trusting him and of always gossiping about him. He was diagnosed as a schizophrenic, and treated by medication, acupuncture. He was assigned study of Mao's essay, "Serve the People," to deal with petit-bourgeois vanity, the man's main problem. Through study of this essay, he learned that we are to innovate for the revolution, that we work not for ourselves, not for fame and gain, but for the revolution. The leadership and comrades of his original unit came to praise him for his activism and enthusiasm, and at the same time to point out his non-proletarian ideas—his subjective deflection from his main tasks. They told him that they trusted him, that they were not gossiping and laughing about him. He pledged to study Mao and to remold his ideology (his point of view) and to be a good worker wholeheartedly working for the revolution. Not worrying about himself and his own performance, he would put aside his vanity and his distrust of his co-workers.

Education thus rectifies the patient's incorrect view of reality by confronting him/her with the results of investigation—the observations of people related to his/her life and work, and by exposing the bases of the misperceptions by studying the works of Mao Tse-tung. Cases cited were cured within two to four months.

CONTINUITY WITH SOCIETY AND FAMILY

The use of education in treatment is remarkable for the extent to which it uses approaches to solving problems practiced outside the hospital. The first area of similarity is the refusal to separate the individual patient from the group and the place in which he/she is at present unable to function. Implicit in this refusal is the conviction that the social group in which he/she normally operates is a reliable source of reality. This conviction in turn rests on the assumption that through bringing people

together, the objective truth of the situation will be discovered. Hence it is possible to involve family and related people in the treatment not only as informants on background information and verification or as providers of moral support, but as objective witnesses to the reality of the situation and the motivations of people which the patient has misconstrued.

The intent not to isolate the patient is present in other aspects of the hospitalization. Visits are permitted three times a week, by family, friends and co-workers—but not by children. Prior to release, people from the place of work to which the patient will go or return participate at the hospital in study sessions with the patient and staff.

Some of the day-to-day activities on and off the wards visibly reflect the orientation toward society. The magazines and books available for patients' reading are the same ones available elsewhere in China: Little Red Guard books, books on the Paris Commune, on the Struggle Between the Two Lines, on Self-Reliance, Selections from Chairman Mao, Heroic Tales, the Red Detachment of Women, etc. Posters of the revolutionary ballet and opera heroes and heroines and of Norman Bethune are displayed on the walls. Pictures of Mao are less formalized: he is seen greeting people in sitting rooms, seated and talking with people. Patients listen to the radio daily. Films are shown weekly or bi-weekly—revolutionary ballets and operas, documentaries and newsreels. Trips are taken outside the hospital to parks and exhibitions.

The absence of a penal atmosphere underscores the purpose of re-integrating, not punishing patients. Wards, not rooms are locked at night and during the afternoon nap. Patients are limited to four per room. Meals are prepared and served on the wards. Patients graded slightly ill go out on the hospital grounds. Patients have charge of their own cigarettes, but not matches; they take care of their toilet articles but not the sharp items.

The second area of similarity with the society outside the hospital is the use of the study method and of Mao Tse-tung's writings. In fact, the extension of a body of thought upon which the life of a society is based, into the realm of restoring balance in lives, is not entirely unknown to us. In the United States we have accustomed ourselves to the claims if not to the unqualified authority of psychological theory. We tend to accept, on the basis of its assumptions, the primacy and particularity of individual lives in both personal and political behavior. And we expect its professional application in the treatment of mental illness. Bewilderment over the use of Mao Tse-tung Thought in the treatment of mental illness may be natural as a first reaction. We may think of Mao as a political thinker, organizer, strategist, dealing with questions of power on a grand scale. But his philosophical and epistemological writings are

designed to enable people to organize their perceptions and formulate a materialistic view of reality. Only if we refuse to grant that Mao's writings are meant to construct an approach to reality can we dismiss their use in the treatment of mental illness. And after all, patients when cured return to the society in which they live and work.

Finally, in addition to the continuity with life outside the hospital afforded by education in treatment, the hospital itself operates on the premise of maximized relations between patients and the entire medical and hospital staff, as in hospitals throughout China. There is a high degree of staff participation with patients in work and recreation (cards, Chinese checkers, ping-pong). Conversely, patients help as they can in sweeping, cleaning vegetables for meals, making beds. This means that maintenance work is done by medical staff and by patients doing jobs that they can handle. Staff give drama performances for patients, and staff and patients also perform together.

The Tientsin Psychiatric Hospital receives an annual government subsidy from the city—not allotted on the basis of the number of patients. In 1971 the subsidy was 325,000 yuan (US\$146,250). The hospital is administered under the Health Bureau of the Tientsin Municipal Revolutionary Committee.

March 1972

Leigh Kagan was a member of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars Second Friendship Delegation to China, March-April 1972. She is completing her doctoral studies, while her husband, Richard Kagan, is teaching Far Eastern History at Grinnell College, in Iowa.



LIVING TOGETHER IN A COMMUNITY

STREET AND NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEES IN CHINA

FIRSTHAND REPORT

Lucille Stewart

THE FENGSHENG DISTRICT AND THE DACHENG NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEE IN PEKING

Ironically, government in a one-party state like China may be more democratic in actual practice at the grass-roots level than it is in the Western democracies—certainly so if the participation of local residents in decision-making and the actual functioning of essential neighborhood services is a prime criterion.

The neighborhood and street committees, with all members except the party representative elected locally, are the basic units of local government. The Fengsheng district, one of nine in the West City area of Peking, is a mixed residential area where 14,136 families live in their own small homes, rather than in apartments or collective living units. But detached housing here does not imply detached social concern or reduced neighborly activities. Although 75 percent of the adults are employed in jobs outside the home, many of them are working in basic-level units which they themselves initiated and operate with near autonomy right in their own neighborhood. And all residents participate in various voluntary neighborhood activities. The Fengsheng Street Committee, one of nine Street Committees in Peking's West City district, has administrative responsibility for 52,980 residents. Eight types of basic-level units, each with its own grass-roots leadership group, operate under the Street Committee's general oversight.

Six street factories

Begun in 1958 by unemployed housewives under the guidance of the "general line" for building socialism, these do-it-yourself workshops had no buildings or equipment in the beginning, so were set up in unused public buildings, temples, old houses, or borrowed rooms. The women brought their own stools, benches and equipment, and worked at first without wages. Now, fourteen years later, the first primitive efforts have developed into ten full-scale factories employing from 100 to 300 workers each. Four of the factories have been taken over by the district government, but six are still operated under the aegis of the Street Committee. The housewives are now skilled work-

ers drawing regular wages, and the factories, which formerly only did processing, now produce their own high quality products. These six factories manufacture insulating materials, rubber gloves, rubber mats, miners' safety caps, industrial springs of all sizes, cardboard boxes and printed labels, clothing, transistor radios and brake linings.

Production group

The production group organizes housewives to carry on hand-work production in their homes. Some women can't leave their homes because of small children or aged parents, but do have time for productive work at home while looking after their families. Their main product is embroidery for export sales. Only 25 percent of Fengsheng district's adults have no jobs outside the home, and 800 of these are workers in the production group.

Service centers

There are eight service stations (fu wu so) in the district, providing basic household services such as repairs for shoes, clothing and appliances, laundering, tailoring and clothesmaking, and washing and quilting of padded bedding. Service is fast; it takes only a week to make a dress while two weeks or more are required at outside shops. The service centers ease the household burdens for working wives.

Primary schools

More than 8,900 pupils attend the ten primary schools of the district. School policies are determined by a local citizens' committee which also supervises the 460 teachers and administrative staff.

Nurseries

Four nurseries are attended by more than 600 small children and infants, some entering immediately after the 56 days of maternity leave for working mothers. There is a small charge, but the neighborhood nurseries are cheaper and more convenient than those at central locations. Children may return home each night or stay until the weekend.

Street hospital

The street hospital is midway between the street clinic operated by the Neighborhood Committee and the large municipal hospitals. There are 86 medical staff members who combine Chinese and Western medicine, providing outpatient service only. Serious cases are sent on to larger hospitals. The Fengsheng Street Hospital is known for its successful use of both Western and traditional methods of bonesetting.

Housing committee

The housing committee determines housing assignments for new families or reassignments when marriage and family additions require changes. They have oversight for housing repairs, rent collections, neighborhood tidiness and general upkeep.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITTEES

The neighborhood committees are self-governing mass organizations. The chairmen and committee members are elected by their neighbors. Fengsheng District has 25 neighborhood committees, an average of 565 households for each committee.

The Dacheng Neighborhood Committee has oversight for 1,741 persons living in 412 households linked by two streets and three alleys (*hutungs*). Once composed largely of poor laborers, the area is now a mixed neighborhood of doctors, teachers, laborers, office workers and cadres. The original committee had 25 members, but some have left for full-time work in factories and now only eleven remain, all housewives. All serve without pay. The chairwoman, Mrs. Liu Hsiang-chih, has five children now old enough to allow her to take a factory job, but she continues to work for the neighborhood committee without pay, "to serve the people."

The Neighborhood Committee has six areas of work.

Personal work

1. They organize the school children to do their homework while parents are at work, and guide them in doing good deeds for needy neighbors, such as fetching water for old people.
2. They organize old people into study classes and to "hu hsiang kuan hsin pang chu" (be concerned for and help each other). Able-bodied old people do shopping errands and household tasks for the infirm.
3. They organize the aged and disabled to work at home, doing knitting and other handwork, thereby contributing to production for the nation while earning some personal income at the same time.
4. They counsel and mediate in domestic quarrels, family differences and problems between neighbors.

Street Clinic

Following Chairman Mao's June 25, 1970 directive urging city doctors to go to the countryside, the residents organized a clinic to handle minor ailments and other treatment. The clinic is convenient, close by their homes, and patients don't have to stand in line. Three housewives who received eight weeks of medical training at the Street Hospital, staff the clinic. Their aim is to "serve the masses." They are well known for certain kinds of Chinese medicine, prepared from 60 kinds of herbs

which they and the clinic committee collect themselves from the old Palace grounds. Western medicine is dispensed at cost. There is no charge for taking blood pressure and other services. One staff member, whose father was a well-known doctor, is known for the successful use of massage in treatment for high blood pressure. She also learned acupuncture by practicing on herself and on her family. The work of the clinic staff includes 1) treatment of minor illnesses and injuries, 2) family planning counseling and providing contraceptives, and 3) administering preventive injections. They also visit the sick in their homes.

"Support agriculture and industry": recycling waste materials

By collecting garbage for pig feed, the neighborhood saved the equivalent of 8,800 pounds of grain in less than a year. During the same period, 84 tons of junk and waste material were collected for recycling or pollution-free disposal.

Group study

While all employed workers participate in group study at their place of work, the housewives have their own study groups. In Dacheng neighborhood four groups meet three days a week for two hours each time to study Mao's philosophical works, Marxist-Leninist classics, current news and world affairs, and special discussion topics. For example, they studied and discussed the implications of the Nixon visit and the Sino-American joint communique. They also propagate safety and traffic rules.

Public hygiene

The Neighborhood Committee is responsible for public health and hygiene inspection of the homes and public areas, the suppression of mosquitoes, flies and vermin, and the maintenance of sanitary conditions in the courtyards. This year there was no hepatitis in the neighborhood.

Public security

The Committee cooperates with the local police precinct station, organizes volunteer labor for digging air raid shelters, and mobilizes auxiliary security volunteers on big holidays. Residents keep an eye on each other's homes. Two years ago a group of youngsters were caught and convicted of petty thievery, but since then the policy is to expand the area of special education, study classes and manual labor for youth. There are very few cases of thievery or housebreaking now.

History of the Street and Neighborhood Committees

The street and neighborhood committees were set up during the Cultural Revolution, implementing the "mass line" (democratic participation) and superseding earlier local organs which functioned directly under the Party.

Dacheng Neighborhood Committee is composed of eleven housewives, but other neighborhood committees include ex-Army men, old cadres, and retired workers—modeled on the three-in-one revolutionary committee system representing Party, Army and masses which sprang up during the Cultural Revolution. But the masses, in this case the housewives, predominate.

The Street Revolutionary Committees were set up during the Cultural Revolution in 1967, but they existed in another form previously—the panshihch'u. The Fengsheng Street Committee was originally called the West City Panshihch'u, set up in 1951.

City communes were organized in 1959. At that time panshihch'u and other state administrative organs merged to form city communes. In 1962 functions were separated and the panshihch'u supervised the neighborhood committees while the communes ran the factories, with both under Party oversight.

Fengsheng Street Committee members explained the reasons for adopting the revolutionary committee style in 1967. First, they were responding in Chairman Mao's call for setting up revolutionary committees; second, there was need for unification and streamlining of administration. In the present setup the Street Party Committee is not separate and overlapping because all members of the Party Committees are members of the Street Committee (but not vice versa).

The Mass Line

The residents of the Dacheng neighborhood, it was explained, can voice their opinions through three channels. Members of the neighborhood and street committees are the people's representatives and are their direct link to state and Party leadership at local and higher levels. The eleven members of the neighborhood committee know the views of their neighbors, and express them at the various district and municipal meetings which they attend. Government cadres, the second channel, come into the neighborhood and consult directly with the residents. And finally, the masses have the right to go directly to government offices and raise any issue they wish. Beyond the neighborhood, the representatives of each unit (factory, clinic, school, service center, etc.) are expected to reflect the views of their colleagues at higher levels.

There is little idle time for the residents of Fengsheng district. All but 7,762 of the 52,980 residents are students, children or employed adults. 75 percent of all adults are employed six days each week outside the home. But all able men and women among the remaining 25 percent are fully occupied in home and neighborhood tasks, volunteer work, study groups or home-based handicraft production. There are no annual vacations in China, only special leaves for illness or family reasons. For example, husbands and wives widely separated by work

assignments, are granted annual leave to be together. Maternity leave of 56 days, with full pay, is standard for working mothers.

The quality of life in this Peking neighborhood seems warm, lively, human. The people themselves are innovating solutions for their own neighborhood needs—day care centers, clinics, family planning services, public safety and sanitation controls, service stations, gainful employment for housewives and others. The elderly and disabled are not isolated, but are kept as functioning members within the community. Women have leadership opportunities. Decisions are made and implemented at the local level by elected representatives of the neighborhood. Even the schools and factories of the Fengsheng district are locally controlled.

A handful of Americans have lived in China throughout the period since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. Some of them stayed on as writers or teachers, working with the Foreign Languages Press or the various schools teaching foreign languages. Some were married to Chinese spouses and had established residence in China. One of these was Lucille Stewart, a former school teacher from Wisconsin who met her future husband on the university campus at Madison in the late 1940s. They returned to China in 1948 and have lived there ever since. Their home is in Peking where Miss Stewart's husband works for the Bank of China and she teaches English in a staff institute of the Ministry of Foreign Trade.

When the American proscription on travel to China was lifted, making it possible for her to return to China after a home visit, Miss Stewart obtained a new U.S. passport in Hong Kong and returned to Wisconsin this past summer—her first visit in 24 years. Before her departure from China, she visited the Dacheng Neighborhood Committee in Peking, together with a group of long-term foreign residents of that city. Her notes from that visit form the basis for the article.



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